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## International Journal of Asian Christianity

Editors-in-Chief: James Ponniah and Jude Lal Fernando

The *International Journal of Asian Christianity* (IJAC) is a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the scholarly examination of Christianity in Asia and of Asian Christian diaspora in the West and elsewhere. While other major Asian religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam have received great deal of international scholarly attention, Christianity is relatively neglected as a subject of study. This journal intends to rectify this neglect by providing a multidisciplinary forum for the examination of Asian Christianity from sociological, anthropological, comparative religion, religious studies, theological, historical and similar perspectives and link such studies to emerging trends in the social sciences such as migration studies, identities, minorities, secularization, fundamentalism, development, and the political roles of religion.

In the diverse and plural contexts of Asian societies and cultures, Christianity has embedded itself in complex ways giving rise to historically particular Christian communities with their own locally and regionally prolific variants of myth, tradition and culture as well as specific engagements with altering economic and political realities. This unique journal creates a space previously unavailable to examine these dense and sophisticated linkages of religion and culture both in their rich distinctiveness as well as in a cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary perspective allowing for broader generalizations and theorizations to emerge.

The journal is open to scholars of all religious persuasions or none undertaking serious work on the historical, anthropological, educational, theological, cultural social and political aspects of Asian Christianity and its role in shaping both the past and present Asian societies. For more information see also the journal's website [here](#).

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Language: English

ISSN: 2542-4246

Print ISSN: 2542-4238

Publisher: Brill

**Volume 9 (2026):  
Issue 1 (Apr 2026)**

**Subjects**

[Asian Studies](#)

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# Imaginary Boundaries of Christianization in Indonesia

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Received 21 November 2024 | Accepted 1 December 2025 |

Published online 13 February 2026

## Abstract

The issue of Christianization is one of the major issues that interferes with interfaith encounters in Indonesia. Relationships across religious identities are hindered by the generalization that all activities involving interfaith encounters initiated by Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, aim to Christianize others. This research intends to show the influence of such issues in the social humanitarian work of the Catholic Church, represented by Karitas Indonesia of the Archdiocese of Semarang (KARINAKAS), and the Christian Church, represented by Emergency Unit of Christian Foundation for Public Health (YAKKUM Emergency Unit/YEU). Both organizations work in disaster response. Using a qualitative approach, the researchers collected data

through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with official staff and volunteers from both organizations. Drawing on Christopher Falzon's Social Dialogue Beyond Fragmentation Theory, this research identifies opportunities for building interfaith relations. This research found that the issue of Christianization limits social relations within the community and at the same time it also encourages people to continue exploring possibilities for cross-identity encounters. The volunteers' engagement generates new awareness that challenges the dominant narrative of Christianization as the sole framework for understanding interreligious encounters in Indonesia. At the grassroots levels, interreligious relations are not defined by rigid binary oppositions. Shared experiences in responding to human suffering create common ground that enables collaborative action for others' well-being.

### Keywords

Christianization – Christian-based social service – social cohesion – interreligious relations

## 1 Introduction

Social service has been a central arena of the Christian Church's activity worldwide, functioning as one of the primary ways the Church enacts its vocation. While these social services are commonly acknowledged as positive contributions, the Indonesian context presents a unique dynamic in which allegations of Christianization (Kristenisasi) often shape public reception of the Church's charitable efforts.<sup>1</sup> In our exploration of several Islamic-based journals on Christianization, the term, from their perspective, refers to the process of introducing Christianity to communities or individuals who do not adhere to the faith,

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<sup>1</sup> Pusat Tarjih, 'Sekilas Mengenal Kekristenan dan Strategi Kristenisasi di Indonesia', *Pusat Tarjih Muhammadiyah*, 27 February 2019, <https://pusattarjih.uad.ac.id/sekilas-mengenal-kekristenan-dan-strategi-kristenisasi-di-indonesia/>; Stefanie Theresia Permata and Royke Siahainenia, 'Umat Islam Dalam Memaknai Isu Kristenisasi Di Salatiga (Suatu Analisis Persepsi Berdasarkan Perspektif Teori Coordinated Management of Meaning)', *Cakrawala Jurnal Penelitian Sosial*, 4:2 (2015); Rusman Hadi, 'Respon Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Terhadap Isu Kristenisasi Pasca Gempa Di Dusun Lololan Desa Loloan Kecamatan Bayan Kabupaten Lombok Utara', *JUPE: Jurnal Pendidikan Mandala*, 7:1 (2022).

or to encouraging them to adopt it. Historically, religious, political, and colonial enterprises walked hand in hand following the failure of the Crusades to expand Christianity among various nations in the Third World, especially among Muslims.<sup>2</sup> In this context, Christianization is not merely a spiritual mission but also an effort to assert and consolidate control over a particular population.<sup>3</sup>

M. Zainuddin Daulay from the Research and Development Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama*) mentions Christianization as a ghost in the Muslim-Christian relations.<sup>4</sup> Th. Sumartana claims explicitly that the issue of Christianization is related to the spreading of Christianity that occurred along with the presence of Western colonialization. This suspicion was reinforced by the translation of the Bible into local languages and the emergence of missionary organizations, such as Zending, that abandoned past beliefs, traditions, and values to become Christians.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, since the early centuries of Islamic existence, Christians and Muslims were searching each other's scriptures to critique each others that they had wrong interpretations.<sup>6</sup> This debate raises several issues, including the divinity of Christ and the Trinity on the Christian side. In contrast, it is reflected in the discussion of whether Muhammad is the final prophet.<sup>7</sup>

M. Alie Humaedi's research found that the issue of Christianization arises in social work with those who have experienced disasters. It is often rumored that these disaster survivors are being directed to convert to Christianity. Such issues occur especially in Muslim-majority areas.

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2 Abdul Hamid, Muhammad Utsman Shalih, and Badrah Uyuni, 'Christianization as a Challenge for Islamic Da'wah in Indonesia', *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* (2023), 23–24.

3 Saleh M.O, 'Al-Nasraniat Wa al-Tamsir Au al-Masihiat Wa al-Tabshir: Dirasaah Muqaranah Haul al-Mushthalahat Wa al-Dilalat [Christianity and Evangelization or Christianity and Christianization: Comparative Study on Terms and Argumentations]', *Maktabah Ibn Al-Qayyim.*, 1989.

4 M Zainuddin Daulay, "Hantu" Di Balik Relasi Islam-Kristen Di Indonesia', *Harmoni*, 14:2 (2015), 172.

5 Th Sumartana, *Mission at the Crossroads: Indigenous Churches, European Missionaries, Islamic Association and Socio-Religious Change in Java, 1812-1936* (BPK Gunung Mulia, 1994).

6 Mark Beaumont, 'Christianity Seen by Muslims and Islam Seen by Christians in the Period of Early Islamic Rule in the Middle East', *International Journal of Asian Christianity*, 5:2 (2022), 206–7.

7 Maqsood P Kamil, 'Islam and Christianity in 19/20th Century South Asian Debates', *International Journal of Asian Christianity*, 5:2 (2022), 220–21.

Humaedi further explains that local cultural considerations are often the cause of rejection of social work in disaster areas, so it requires the involvement of Mosques and traditional leaders who bridge religions and local cultures.<sup>8</sup> Rusman Hadi examined the response of Islamic educational institutions to the issue of Christianization after the earthquake in Loloan, North Lombok. He proves that activities perceived as Christianization, such as sprinkling water during trauma healing, are not a form of Christianization.<sup>9</sup> In line with M. Alie Humaedi's findings, social work activities should align with local culture.<sup>10</sup>

Many researchers have conducted research on the issue of Christianization from various perspectives. Permata and Siahainenia (2015) examined the factors influencing perceptions of Christianization. The study found that attitude, interest, experience, size, and time positively influenced the perception of Christianization in Salatiga.<sup>11</sup> Albert Leonarts Jantje Haans, using a literary study method, explains the negative impact of the Christianization issue on evangelism.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Angel Damayanti and Sri Yunanto examined evangelization during the colonial period and concluded that they were considered a threat for Muslims. The increasing acts of Islamic radicalism and the accompanying vision to establish an Islamic state were frightening the Christians.<sup>13</sup> Hamid et al. (2023), Hadi (2022), and Rahmah (2020) analyze the impact of Christianity as a missionary religion on Islamic propagation in Indonesia.<sup>14</sup> These studies

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- 8 M Alie Humaedi, 'Disaster Management Based on The Perspective of Inter-Religious Connection and Local Wisdom Antar Agama Dan Penghargaan Terhadap Kebudayaan Lokal', *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion*, 22:2 (2015), 211.
- 9 Rusman Hadi, 'Respon Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Terhadap Isu Kristenisasi Pasca Gempa Di Dusun Lololan Desa Loloan Kecamatan Bayan Kabupaten Lombok Utara', *JUPE: Jurnal Pendidikan Mandala*, 7:1 (2022).
- 10 M Alie Humaedi, *Etnografi Bencana; Menakar Peran Para Pemimpin Lokal Dalam Pengurangan Resiko Bencana* (Lkis Pelangi Aksara, 2016).
- 11 Permata and Siahainenia, 'Umat Islam Dalam Memaknai Isu Kristenisasi Di Salatiga (Suatu Analisis Persepsi Berdasarkan Perspektif Teori Coordinated Management of Meaning).'
- 12 Albert Leonarts Jantje Haans, 'Impact of Christianization on the Process of Preaching the Gospel in Indonesia', *International Journal of Social, Policy and Law*, 2:3 (2021), 111.
- 13 Angel Damayanti and Sri Yunanto, 'From Evangelization to Worship Restrictions: The Changing Characteristics of Threat Perception between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 33:4 (2022), 333-35.
- 14 Abdul Hamid, Muhammad Utsman Shalih, and Badrah Uyuni, 'Christianization as a Challenge for Islamic Da'wah in Indonesia', *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies* (2023), 19-60; Hadi, 'Respon Lembaga Pendidikan Islam Terhadap Isu Kristenisasi Pasca Gempa Di Dusun Lololan Desa Loloan Kecamatan Bayan Kabupaten Lombok Utara', 2022; Nova Nur Rahmah, 'Strategi Dakwah Mohammad Natsir: Respon Terhadap Kristenisasi Dan Nativisasi Di Indonesia', *Jurnal Al-Aqidah*, 12:1 (2020), 48-64.

found that in Indonesia various activities perceived as forms of Christianization cause social suspicion that reduce social cohesion. As a consequence, people restrict any Muslim-Christian encounters.

Previous studies on the issue of Christianization have primarily focused on conflict and explaining the threat posed by religious communities. However, research examining how faith-based social institutions carry out humanitarian missions while minimizing concerns about Christianization has remained limited. This research differs from previous studies in several ways. First, this research examines the issues of Christianization faced by Protestant and Catholic-based social organizations, specifically KARINA KAS and YEU, in their humanitarian work for disaster-affected communities. Secondly, previous studies have focused on the meaning of humanitarian activities organized by Christians and the emergence of the issue of Christianization. This study, however, explains how humanitarian service agencies respond to the issue of Christianization and seek to build encounters so that they do not hinder humanitarian services. This second difference also addresses the suggestions of Abdul Hamid, M. Uthman Shalih, and Badrah Uyuni's research regarding the importance of dialogue in fostering interreligious harmony. This research focuses on the form of dialogue in response to the issue of Christianization.<sup>15</sup>

## 2 Method

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing interpretative phenomenological analysis. This method aligns with the study's purpose: to understand the problem of stigmatization of Christianization experienced by the Church's social works through an in-depth exploration of administrators' and volunteers' experiences.<sup>16</sup> The informants of this research consisted of four official staff and eight volunteers, each from KARINAKAS and YEU. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with administrators and volunteers from KARINAKAS and YEU. Through these data collection techniques, researchers obtained an overview of the phenomena experienced by both institutions. Data validity was conducted through data triangulation by confirming the answers of administrators,

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<sup>15</sup> Hamid, Shalih, and Uyuni, 'Christianization as a Challenge for Islamic Da'wah in Indonesia.'

<sup>16</sup> Sumartana, *Mission at the Crossroads: Indigenous Churches, European Missionaries, Islamic Association and Socio-Religious Change in Java, 1812-1936* (1944).

volunteers, and documents in the form of procedures that regulate what must be done when KARINAKAS and YEU are about to enter an affected area.

### 3 Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 *Christianization Issue in KARINAKAS and YEU Social Projects*

Indonesia hosts many faith-based social organizations. Within the Islamic community as the majority in the country, Muhammadiyah works through LAZISMU (Lembaga Amil, Zakat dan Sedekah Muhammadiyah),<sup>17</sup> and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) through LAZISNU (Lembaga Amil, Zakat, dan Sedekah Nahdlatul Ulama),<sup>18</sup> each playing an important role in social outreach. NU and Muhammadiyah are two major Islamic organizations in Indonesia that are widely regarded as representing moderate Islam and embracing religious diversity in the country.<sup>19</sup> In the Buddhist community, one of the most prominent social organizations active in disaster relief is the Tzu Chi Foundation.<sup>20</sup> The Catholic Church works with Caritas Indonesia (Karina)<sup>21</sup> as the representative of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, while the Protestant communities, Yayasan Tanggul Bencana, belong to PGI (Communion of Churches in Indonesia).<sup>22</sup> At the local level, several faith-based humanitarian organizations exist.

This research focuses on the local organization in Yogyakarta belonging to the Christian communities: KARINA KAS and YEU. KARINA KAS, an organization affiliated with the local Catholic Church, was established in response to the earthquake that struck Yogyakarta and its surrounding areas on May 27, 2006. Meanwhile, YEU, which belongs to local Protestant Churches in Yogyakarta, was established in 2001 to conduct inclusive and participatory disaster response and build community resilience through disaster risk

17 'Lazismu - Lembaga Amil Zakat Nasional | Memberi Untuk Negeri', accessed 18 November 2025, <https://lazismu.org/>.

18 'NU CARE LAZISNU', accessed 18 November 2025, <https://nucare.id/>.

19 Masdar Hilmy, 'Whither Indonesia's Islamic Moderatism?: A Reexamination on the Moderate Vision of Muhammadiyah and NU', *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 7:1 (2013), 24–48; Abdul Jamil Wahab, *Islam Radikal Dan Moderat Diskursus Dan Kontestasi Varian Islam Indonesia* (Elex Media Komputindo, 2019).

20 'Yayasan Buddha Tzu Chi Indonesia', accessed 18 November 2025, <https://www.tzuchi.or.id/>.

21 Beranda | Caritas Indonesia', accessed 20 November 2025, <https://karina.or.id/id>.

22 "Yayasan Tanggul Bencana | Corporate NGO Partnerships," accessed November 20, 2025, <https://www.globalhand.org/en/organisations/23472>.

reduction practices. Both organizations are actively involved in various forms of social outreach, particularly in disaster response, providing essential assistance and support to affected communities. At the outset of their social engagement, neither KARINA KAS nor YEU faced concerns related to accusations of Christianization. This was evident during their mobilization to assist victims of the 2006 Yogyakarta earthquake. Throughout the emergency response and the subsequent recovery phase, the services provided by both organizations were warmly welcomed by the local community.

KARINAKAS began to experience problems when establishing the Rehabilitation with Community Resources (*Rehabilitasi Bersumberdaya Masyarakat* or RBM) project in Wedi and Gantiwarno sub-districts. This RBM project focuses on activities in health, education, empowerment, and inclusion for earthquake victims with disabilities. All of the RBM projects were well received, and in its development spread to almost all of Klaten Regency. This was also the case with YEU's disaster response activities. In some assisted villages, YEU staff and volunteers can freely stay at the village head's house and carry out activities with residents without any problems. They mingle well and provide the necessary assistance to residents who are victims, without any obstacles.

In an interview with KARINAKAS staff on 14 May 2024, it was mentioned that the first rejection was experienced in 2011. At that time, the Islamic Forum of Karangturi Village, Gantiwarno Sub-district, Klaten Regency, rejected the KARINAKAS project. Certain group expressed their rejection in a meeting in Karangturi Village Hall on 26 April 2011, which was supposed to make an agreement between KARINAKAS and the villagers.<sup>23</sup> At that time, 27 people attended (3 KARINAKAS staff and 24 villagers). The reason for the rejection did not directly and explicitly lead to the issue of Christianization, but was wrapped in four accusations addressed to KARINAKAS. The four accusations were: KARINAKAS carried out activities involving local residents without prior coordination; KARINAKAS organized activities during hours when people had to pray; KARINAKAS did not allow Muslim participants to leave the event for a moment; and KARINAKAS conducted worship and invited children to sing during activities. Based on these allegations, all forms

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23 Staff 1 of KARINAKAS, 'Interview on Christianization Issue in KARINAKAS Social Project', 14 May 2024.

of intervention and assistance from KARINAKAS in the Karangturi Village area were rejected.<sup>24</sup>

In further investigation, according to KARINAKAS officials, this rejection did not originate with the Karangturi Village community but with other villages. In fact, the Village Head said that the RBM project was very beneficial for the community and was therefore very supportive. This project was also supported by the Village Midwife, who is responsible for the healthcare sector in the village, and she actively participated in RBM projects because she felt that they were very helpful in addressing various community health problems. However, this staff member commented: “Even though they supported this program, both of them who actually have a role in the community could not do anything due to this rejection.”<sup>25</sup> As a result of this rejection, KARINAKAS decided to stop the RBM project in Karangturi Village, although it did not confirm the allegations made. The suspension was intended to avoid a more serious conflict in the community between the RBM beneficiaries, local volunteers, community leaders and village officials, as well as the Muslim Forum of Karangturi Village. In addition, KARINAKAS also adheres to the principle that assistance should not be imposed so that when there is rejection, according to the standard operating procedure (SOP), KARINAKAS decides to withdraw.

The second issue of Christianization occurred in Pandes Village, Wedi Sub-district, Klaten District in February 2012. This issue was blown up by some Muslims in Pandes Village who were members of a group with hardliners. However, this issue was immediately defused by the village officials and diffable activists in Pandes Village. A staff of KARINAKAS explains,

This issue failed to gain any traction or credibility among the society due to the proactive measures and swift response of the local activists in mitigating its spread. We could continue our RBM project. In fact, according to the administrators, after experiencing the real benefits of these projects, the community became more open and accepted KARINAKAS’ presence without any problems surrounding the issue of Christianization.<sup>26</sup>

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24 *Wawancara dengan Pengurus KARINAKAS KAS* (Kantor KARINAKAS KAS, Jl. Empu Panuluh No.377A, Pringwulung, Condongcatu, Kec. Depok, Kabupaten Sleman, Yogyakarta, 14 Mei 2024).

25 *Wawancara dengan Pengurus KARINAKAS KAS* (Kantor KARINAKAS KAS, Jl. Empu Panuluh No.377A, Pringwulung, Condongcatu, Kec. Depok, Kabupaten Sleman, Yogyakarta, 14 Mei 2024).

26 Staff 1 of KARINAKAS, ‘Interview on Christianization Issue in KARINAKAS Social Project’, 14 May 2024, 2.

After focusing on RBM projects and with beneficiaries becoming more independent, in 2015, KARINAKAS shifted its focus on to the elderly in Sleman and Gunungkidul Regencies. This project aims to enhance the welfare of the elderly by increasing access to healthcare services. In Gunungkidul Regency, KARINAKAS was present in eleven villages in Karangasem Administrative Village, Paliyan Sub-district. Meanwhile, in Sleman Regency, KARINAKAS the project reaches 13 sub-villages in Girikerto Village, Turi Sub-district. This includes several activities: increasing the competence of KARINAKAS staff; local cadres and volunteers that will be in charge for maintaining the program when KARINAKAS finishes the project; providing facilities and services for *Posyandu Lansia* (integrated care centers for the elderly); NGOBRAS (*Ngobrol Santai Bersama Lansia* or chit chat with the elderly) at the Sub-district level; raising awareness of the importance of caring for the elderly properly through various means; providing facilities and infrastructure for the elderly to have a legal identity; social security, and fulfilling their daily needs; and empowering the elderly to be actively involved in community social activities. KARINAKAS always works in cooperation with the local government. In their procedure, they must conduct stakeholder discussions before the project. In this case it is the local government: village and hamlet heads, along with their officials, as well as social institutions; and local community leaders. During the meeting, they sign the official memorandum of co-operation.<sup>27</sup>

The KARINAKAS experienced rejection of the project for the elderly in several places because it was associated with the issue of Christianization. In a conversation with a volunteer from KARINAKAS who is also an official of Karangasem Village, it was revealed that this rejection occurred in three hamlets: Lemahabang, Karangasem B, and Mengger. The issue of Christianization that led to this rejection was blown up since the beginning of KARINAKAS' presence, not by the local community members and cadres, but by the heads of each hamlet. Explicitly, the main reason for rejection was that the project came from a Catholic institution.<sup>28</sup> Specifically, one of the volunteer explains,

The heads of hamlets who rejected the project were not present during the socialization of the project, so they did not understand the context of the project. Meanwhile, we, the heads of hamlets and cadres, who were present during the socialization and initial implementation of the

27 Staff 1 of KARINAKAS, 'Interview on Christianization Issue in KARINAKAS Social Project', 14 May 2024, 1.

28 The Karangasem Village Officials and KARINAKAS KAS Volunteers, 'Focus Group Discussion on Christianization Issue in KARINAKAS Social Project', 26 June 2024.

project, understood the context of the project. Because of this understanding, they accepted, as well as provided support, facilities, and cooperation. They said that in this case, they did not see any indication of Christianization at all.<sup>29</sup>

Although the hamlets which refused had received explanations from the village officials and other hamlets, they still chose to reject KARINAKAS's presence and the project's continuation. As a follow-up to the rejection, and with the head of Karangasem village's consideration, KARINAKAS continued to run the project in seven other hamlets in Karangasem village that accepted it. Meanwhile, they discontinued the project in the three hamlets that rejected them. Even the village officials have continued to talk to the three rejecting hamlets, but they are still not budging. Another volunteer from KARINAKAS explained that the cadres in the three hamlets were very disappointed with the hamlets' unilateral decision to reject KARINAKAS' project. They prefer to stay involved in KARINAKAS' project. While hoping that their hamlet could accept the project, they studied KARINAKAS' sustainability projects and implemented them independently in their own hamlet.<sup>30</sup>

The second faith-based social organization is YEU. YEU, which has a mandate to conduct disaster response from the YAKKUM, also faces various issues of Christianization in its social services. One YEU volunteer reported that after the 2004 earthquake and tsunami in Aceh, they received information that the community rejected some aid provided by the Church. He mentions:

For us, this information pointed to the issue of Christianization. Therefore, when we came to aid, we made strategies to reduce the Christianization issue by minimizing the use of Christian symbols. In fact, in some activities we wore Muslim religious symbols, such as sarong or hijab. Nonetheless, we were still suspected at the border of North Sumatra when we were about to enter Aceh. However, as no

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29 The Karangasem Village Officials and KARINAKAS KAS Volunteers, 'Focus Group Discussion on Christianization Issue in KARINAKAS Social Project', 26 June 2024.

30 The Karangasem Village Officials and KARINAKAS KAS Volunteers, 'Focus Group Discussion on Christianization Issue in KARINAKAS Social Project', 26 June 2024.

signs of Christianization were found, they allowed us to enter and aid in Aceh.<sup>31</sup>

During the earthquake in Takengon, Central Aceh, in 2014, YEU was also rejected by a village due to issues of Christianization. Due to this rejection they move to a neighboring village. However, a month later, after seeing the benefits of YEU's assistance and services in the neighboring village and there was no evidence that YEU were Christianizing, they asked YEU volunteers to return to their village. However, given the agreements that had been made and the rules of engagement that they had established with the donors, this request could not be made.<sup>32</sup>

From 2017 to 2018, in Pidie Jaya, YEU's team was suspected of being a political campaigning organization. They were able to organize an emergency phase there, but could not carry out the transition process because during the transition period they experienced rejection. The issue of religion was echoed there:

Local people asked for the administration of the institution document, whether it was registered or not and whether there was a decree of assignment. They searched our bags looking for any letters, videos or Bibles that showed signs of Christianization. Even though there was not any evidence, they did not permit us.<sup>33</sup> Due to this situation, we found a new strategy: the importance of introducing ourselves and declaring our presence to the offices, mayors, regents, religious leaders and influential organizations. This procedure is important since they usually make complaints when outsiders do not give them respect, they feel they are being stepped over.<sup>34</sup>

The second volunteer from YEU says that in 2018, during the earthquakes in Lombok and Palu, YEU volunteers also experienced the issue of Christianization. In Palu, YEU and Pelkesi (an ACT Alliance member)

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31 Staff 1 of YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), 'Interview on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 14 May 2024, 1.

32 Staff 1 of YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), 'Interview on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 14 May 2024, 2.

33 *Wawancara dengan Pengurus Yakkum Emergency Unit* (Kantor YEU Yogyakarta, Jl. Kaliurang KM 12.5, Dusun Candi 3 No. 34, Sardonoharjo, Ngaglik, Sleman, Yogyakarta, 16 Mei 2024).

34 Staff 2 of YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), 'Interview on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 14 May 2024, 2.

coordinated the dispatch of medical teams.<sup>35</sup> Although their presence and services were generally accepted, there was a rejection when the medical team provided mobile clinic services at a Christian school. However, the issue of Christianization was quickly defused, and the service continued without any significant problems.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, in Lombok, the issue of Christianization was blown up in the form of protests and the taking down of YEU and Act Alliance banners because of the symbol in the form of a cross in this writing:

The second YEU Staff member explains:

For the protesters, the letter 't' which resembles a cross is considered to damage their *aqidah* (faith). This experience in Lombok gave rise to a new strategy for us when entering a new service area in the form of a code of conduct to disclose all information about its identity from the beginning (who, where, what religion, etc.). Behind all this information provided, we are ready from the beginning to be accepted or rejected. If rejected, we will make a rejection letter signed by a representative of the rejecting community, then do not continue the service and move to another place. Meanwhile, if accepted, we make a joint commitment by including a hotline number.<sup>37</sup>

An incident similar to what happened in Lombok, namely the issue of the 'cross' symbol, occurred in Lhokseumawe, when the YEU volunteer team accidentally brought a medicine from Bethesda Hospital, a Protestant-based hospital located in Yogyakarta, that had a cross symbol. This rejection comes as the accusation of Christianization through the plastic medicine bag.<sup>38</sup>

In Java, YEU also experienced the issue of Christianization several times. Volunteer 3 from YEU also revealed that at the time of the earthquake in

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35 'Data from YEU and ACT Alliance', unpublished manuscript, <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Indonesia-Emergency-Assistance-to-People-Affected-by-the-Earthquake-and-Tsunami-in-Central-Sulawesi-%E2%80%93-IDNi82.pdf>, n.d.

36 YEU Volunteers, 'Focus Group Discussion on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 25 June 2024, Zoom Meeting.

37 Staff 1 of YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), 'Interview on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 14 May 2024, 1.

38 YEU Volunteers, 'Focus Group Discussion on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 25 June 2024.

Cianjur, the presence of YEU volunteers had been rejected from the start in an area controlled by the Islamic Defense Front (*Front Pembela Islam* or FPI), and they chose to cancel their aid planning. However, they did not leave Cianjur altogether. One of volunteer mentions:

We remain present and help earthquake victims in other areas by approaching an influential Ustad and the manager of an Islamic Boarding School who has affiliation with Nahdatul Ulama, the biggest Islamic organization in Indonesia that has a good connection with us in many areas in Indonesia. Due to the support of the Ustad, who in a grand recitation delivered YEU's projects and gave assurances that there was no Christianization, YEU's presence and projects were well received.<sup>39</sup>

These data show us a social phenomenon in which issues of Christianization are familiar in Muslim-Christian relations in the context of disaster response. The following discussion provides us with an explanation of this phenomenon in the context of social cohesion.

### 3.2 *Social Fragmentation and Alternative Options*

In his book, *Foucault and Social Dialogue Beyond Fragmentation*, Christopher Falzon reveals the state of society in the second half of the twentieth century. Society is experiencing what he calls 'the death of the subject' or 'the death of the human being'.<sup>40</sup> In this case, human beings are trapped between being subjected to the absolutism of those who have power (in Michel Foucault's view, those who have economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital) and becoming indecisive among the various subjects that determine the direction of world thought. This is parallel to being caught between foundationalism (there is a single standard of the reality of the world) and fragmentation (humans live in a plurality of ideas that cannot be unified).<sup>41</sup> Through his book, Falzon explains that humans have an opportunity to be free and not be trapped in either of them. In his discussion, Falzon describes Foucault's thought as 'curiosity'. This curiosity makes people see "the consciousness of

39 YEU Volunteers, 'Focus Group Discussion on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 25 June 2024.

40 Christopher Falzon, *Foucault and the History of Philosophical Transcendence: Freedom, Nature and Agency* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024), p. 196.

41 Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (University of Pennsylvania press, 1983), pp. 1–2; Chris Falzon, *Foucault and Social Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation* (Routledge, 2006), p. 1.

reality in a sharper way,” or in other words, “see the same thing differently.” This awareness brings “the desire to grasp what is happening now and what is disappearing.”<sup>42</sup> This attitude allows people to appreciate the present, “imagine it in a different way than it is, and change it not by destroying it but by capturing it for what it is.”<sup>43</sup>

This thought is in line with Richard Bernstein, who revealed that humans today need to break out of the standard opposition.<sup>44</sup> A growing uneasiness permeates intellectual and cultural life since people are looking at certain condition in extreme binary opposition: objectivism versus relativism or rationality versus irrationality. This opposition reveals how often people become trapped in rigid either-or categories. Therefore, it is importance to broaden and enriching human perspectives in order to understand reality in a more adequate perspective.<sup>45</sup> Stephen J. Ball’s perspective highlights Falzon’s idea of ‘Fundamental encounter with the other.’ He emphasized that self-formation is not an act of isolated self-focus. The encounter with others disrupts our narcissism and breaks the boundaries of solipsism. Our shared life with others is infinite because it is the very ground of ethics, shaping a way of being that emerges from our own history and reflection. Thus, people are denying the reality by refusing the role of different others.<sup>46</sup> Falzon criticizes Jürgen Habermas’ thought, which reveals that postmodernity is based on the reality of fragmentation, relativism, and an extraordinary plurality of views. Falzon held that behind the reality of the plurality of opinions in postmodern society, there remains a metaphysical idea that essentially provides an overview of a complete and comprehensive worldview.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, one must be skeptical of the totality that characterizes metaphysical societies that seem to determine the truth of everything. In insisting on his argument, he cites Foucault: Foucault argues that we need to get rid of the constituting subject altogether, to apprehend the subject historically: “one has to dispense with

42 Michel Foucault and James D Faubion, *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. Vol. 3, *Power* (Penguin, 2000), p. 325.

43 Foucault and Faubion, *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. Vol. 3, *Power*, p. 311; Timothy O’Leary and Christopher Falzon, *Foucault and Philosophy* (Wiley Online Library, 2010), p. 3.

44 Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*, pp. 1–2; Falzon, *Foucault and Social Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation*, p. 1.

45 Richard Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis* (University of Pennsylvania press, 1983), pp. 1–2.

46 Stephen J Ball, ‘A Horizon of Freedom: Using Foucault to Think Differently about Education and Learning’, *Power and Education*, 11:2 (2019), 140–41.

47 Falzon, *Foucault and Social Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation*, pp. 2–4.

the constituting subject, to get rid of the subject itself, that's to say, to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within a historical framework.<sup>48</sup>

However, skeptics must also be ready to be questioned. Falzon even suggests that René Descartes' thought, based on human thought (*Cogito Ergo Sum*), often could not replace the role of God in medieval thought. So, this critical attitude towards the 'certainty of modernity' must be dismantled. One does not have to choose between being absolute or relative, but one can opt for the middle way. Falzon explains it as the choice to dialogue with reality. In this case, the death of the subject does not need to be understood as the throwing of humans into fragmentation and pluralism of ideas, but the death of the subject is a way to understand the human self through dialogue.<sup>49</sup> Dialogue becomes an alternative way of seeing reality. Humans abandoned the fundamental notion of metaphysics, which seemed to offer a single understanding of reality, but at the same time entered a vision of fragmentation, the possibility of understanding the world in various ways. In this regard, Falzon expresses:

Indeed, human beings can perhaps be defined as form-giving beings. But we break decisively from metaphysical thinking when we recognize that, though we may strive to tame and shape the world, it can never be fully captured or fully organized. It is always resisting and beyond our reach. In seeking to organize the world, we are bound to come up against others, who elude our categories and who are able to influence and shape us in turn. In other words, we are bound to engage in dialogue.<sup>50</sup>

From Foucault's perspective, critiques can be an opportunity to acknowledge the possibilities of ethics. This understanding potentially leads to radical relativism, skepticism, and nihilism. These possibilities enable us to understand the finite subjectivity before the infinite reality.<sup>51</sup> Falzon argues that in this postmodern society, the need for dialogue that involves reciprocity, two-way movement, back and forth, or interaction between ourselves and the

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48 Foucault and Faubion, *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. Vol. 3, *Power*, p. 118; Falzon, *Foucault and the History of Philosophical Transcendence: Freedom, Nature and Agency*, p. 17.

49 Falzon, *Foucault and Social Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation*, p. 3.

50 Falzon, *Foucault and Social Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation*, p. 4.

51 Falzon, *Foucault and the History of Philosophical Transcendence: Freedom, Nature and Agency*, p. 2.

world is increasing. Social dialogue does not preclude a form of social unity, even though dialogue makes people aware of the existence of various orders and hierarchies that cannot be unified. The various orders need to be understood so that people finally realize the existence of diversity. Frozen ideas about the other are dismantled through the realization of diversity. Through dialogue, traditional ethics that absolutize certain forms of life, that stop dialogue, are dismantled. From here, Falzon offers a dialogical ethics, an ethics that involves openness to other perspectives and denies any single standard of knowledge. This model of thinking serves as a means of promoting dialogue and social transformation.<sup>52</sup>

Within the process of dialogue, the exploration of possibilities cannot occur in individualistic or solitary relationships. Otherwise, Foucault emphasizes the importance of the social and political framework when society is talking about ethical action. This social understanding is not merely a self-centered narcissism, but also about fundamental encounters with the other as Falzon mentions.<sup>53</sup> In articulating the importance of dialogue, Mark Olssen chooses the expression “a relationship between the individual and the future of society as a system” as the most fitting description.<sup>54</sup> This ethic of openness encourages and facilitates dialogue in keeping with the finite nature of human beings in the midst of historical processes. This recognition does contradict the absolute and universal metaphysical ethic. They claim that there is only one legitimate way of life. Metaphysical ethics has a bias that assumes all other ways of life must conform to its principles. This model of thinking contributes to the subjugation of others and, in turn, fosters a closed, domineering mindset. It is different from the ethic of openness, which recognizes different perspectives and ways of life and does not absolutize its own way of life as the only way of living and acting, but only one among others. In other words, this recognition makes people realize that their way of life is limited and therefore may differ from others.<sup>55</sup>

According to Falzon, through deepening Foucault’s theory, social practices in society go beyond the metaphysical normative.<sup>56</sup> He conceptualizes social practice as a dynamic arena of competing forces, and argues that through

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52 Falzon, *Foucault and Social Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation*, pp. 5–6.

53 Jordi Collet-Sabé and Stephen J Ball, ‘Beyond School. The Challenge of Co-Producing and Commoning a Different Episteme for Education’, *Journal of Education Policy*, 38:6 (2023), 5.

54 Mark Olssen, *Constructing Foucault’s Ethics: A Poststructuralist Moral Theory for the Twenty-First Century* (Manchester University Press, 2021), p. 118.

55 Falzon, *Foucault and Social Dialogue: Beyond Fragmentation*, pp. 10–11.

56 Michel Foucault, *Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of ‘Political Reason’* (University of Utah Press, 1979), p. 5.

dialogue, these interactions can evolve into a broader historical process. This social practice forms a new social order in response to a society dominated by various forms of oppression. According to him, this process then does not require any normative justification. This is the fundamental reason why dialogue is important. Critical reflections facilitate resistance to domination and promote ongoing dialogue. The aim is not to build a society in the social sphere that conforms to universal norms. Such a model is one that Foucault does not accept. Rather, he offers a critical reflection on the unitary form of social organization in history, problematizing it and thereby allowing space for new ideas more accommodating of difference. Falzon's notion of dialogue amid social fragmentation points to the importance of understanding reality to find new possibilities that better accommodate differences. Discussions of Christianization among Christians are regarded as far-fetched, while among some Muslims, the issue is regarded as a single truth that can be applied to all Christian social work. This research sees the issue as one that can be questioned. From Falzon's reflection and the empirical findings of this study, two aspects can be further examined: the issue of Christianization as a normal occurrence and the need to challenge its broad generalization.

### 3.3 *The Issue of Christianization as Normality*

There are at least three reasons why the issue of Christianization is justified. Firstly, Christians, both Catholics and Protestants, have a commission from Jesus himself to preach the Gospel throughout the world (cf. Mark 16:15). As such, Christians have an obligation to do religious propagation, which is often referred to as mission or evangelization. For some Christians, mission or evangelization has a broader meaning, namely, an effort to proclaim the good news in a pluralist society to create a more humane and civilized life. However, for others, evangelization is seen and implemented as a process of Christianizing non-Christians.<sup>57</sup> The former does not aim to convert non-Christians to Christianity, while the latter does. This process of religious conversion is commonly understood as Christianization.

The obligation to evangelize is not only shared by Christians, but also by people of other religions, such as Islam. In Islam, a similar concept to mission or evangelization is da'wah. As with the understanding and implementation of mission and evangelization, da'wah can also target non-Muslim groups and aim to get them to embrace Islam. However, da'wah can also be interpreted generally as an attempt to proclaim and realize Islamic values to society. The

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57 Alamsyah M Djafar, 'Islamisasi Dan Kristenisasi: Isu-Isu Krusial Di Seputar Proselitisme Dan Hak Kebebasan Beragama', *Jurnal Hak Asasi Manusia*, 11:11 (2014), 117–18.

former aims for conversion to Islam, and the latter is simply for propagation.<sup>58</sup> Thus, both in Islam and Christianity, the movement and efforts of Christianization, as well as Islamization, are indeed a normal thing. In fact, Christianization and Islamization efforts carried out to other religious communities in a peaceful manner are fundamental elements of freedom of religion guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and ratified international instruments. In this case, Christianization and Islamization can be seen as part of the worship guaranteed by Article 29, paragraph 2, of the 1945 Constitution. The right is part of the implementation of worship, according to religion and belief, respectively. In Falzon's perspective, rather than accepting Christianization as right or wrong, good or bad, this research finds that Christianization is as much a part of the process of living together in Indonesian society as Islamization.

Secondly, the issue of Christianization, which is often raised by Muslims against Christians, is also a natural occurrence because of the long historical experience since independence (1945). Amos Sukamto, in his research, found that from the beginning of independence until the events of 1965, the common life in Indonesian society was overwhelmed by tensions between Islamic groups and nationalists.<sup>59</sup> This was triggered by the objections of nationalists and Christian groups from Eastern Indonesia who rejected and demanded that the seven sentences of the Jakarta Charter, 'with the obligation to implement Islamic law for its adherents,' be removed from the Preamble of the 1945 Constitution. This was when the seeds of tension between Islam and Christianity emerged.<sup>60</sup> In the 1950s, there was a resurgence of faith. The followers of these sects later became the main base of the Indonesian Communist Party (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or PKI). Therefore, PKI emerged as the principal adversary of Muslims and Islamic Political groups. Consequently, after the failed coup, a number of Muslims, including Ansor as the youth organization of Nahdlatul Ulama participated in eliminating those people labelled as PKI supporters.<sup>61</sup>

58 Djafar, 'Islamisasi Dan Kristenisasi: Isu-Isu Krusial Di Seputar Proselitisme Dan Hak Kebebasan Beragama', 118.

59 Amos Sukamto, 'Ketegangan Antar Kelompok Agama Pada Masa Orde Lama Sampai Awal Orde Baru: Dari Konflik Perumusan Ideologi Negara Sampai Konflik Fisik', *Indonesian Journal of Theology*, 11 (2013), 25-47.

60 Anggit Rizkianto, *Relasi Agama Dan Pancasila: Mengukuhkan Karakter Kebangsaan* (Pustaka Aksara, 2021), p. 66.

61 Vannessa Hearman, 'The 1965-1966 Violence, Religious Conversions and the Changing Relationship between the Left and Indonesia's Churches', in *The Indonesian Genocide of 1965: Causes, Dynamics and Legacies* (Springer, 2018), p. 180; The brief revival of debate on

Vannessa Hearman describes that internationally, the conversion to Christianity during this era, both among violence-affected communities and prison, attracted attention from several scholars.<sup>62</sup> In the Avery T. Willis description at least there were two million Indonesians joining Christianity in 1966 onwards.<sup>63</sup> Several example could be mentioned here: The Catholic Church in the Semarang Archdiocese of Central Java recorded a growth of 126 % (from 103,195 to 234,135 Catholics);<sup>64</sup> the Protestant Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW) in East Java, the oldest churches in Java, 27,500 new members were baptized between 1964-1967;<sup>65</sup> while in 1966, among the Chinese in East Java, there were only 16.7 % who were Catholic and by 1969, 26.7 % were Catholics.<sup>66</sup> This massive conversion to Christianity further exacerbated the existing imaginary boundaries between Islam and Christianity. Some Muslims felt threatened because of significant increasing number of Christians. Therefore, if previously they considered the *abangan* groups as threats, after the large-scale conversions of 1965-1966, it was the Christians whom they considered as threats. The long historical background of conflict and tension between Islam and Christianity further strengthens the argument that the issue of Christianization is a real ongoing one.<sup>67</sup>

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NU's role in the 1965-66 killings was the only time since the mid-1960s that the issue gained wide public attention. Its quick disappearance is the evidence how sensitive and difficult the topic remains, especially within NU. This community leaders often highlight Ansor's role in protecting Muslims from the communist threat, displaying photos of training and anti-communist parades while avoiding about the killing. At the same time, some NU-linked NGOs have quietly run several reconciliation programs with former communists. Together, these responses show how tricky and delicate the situation was. Greg Fealy and Katharine McGregor, 'Nahdlatul Ulama and the Killings of 1965-66: Religion, Politics, and Remembrance', *Indonesia*, no. 89 (2010), 37-38.

62 David Bentley-Taylor, *The Weathercock's Reward: Christian Progress in Muslim Java* (Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1967); Frank L Cooley, *Indonesia: Church and Society* (Friendship Press, 1968); Alan Thomson, 'The Churches in Java in the Aftermath of the Thirtieth of September Movement', *South East Asia Journal of Theology*, 9:3 (1968), 7-20; Avery T Willis, *Indonesian Revival: Why Two Million Came to Christ* (William Carey Library, 1977).

63 Willis, *Indonesian Revival: Why Two Million Came to Christ*.

64 Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Adriaan Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Brill, 2008), pp. 35.

65 Cooley, *Indonesia: Church and Society*, p. 86.

66 Charles A Coppel, *Indonesian Chinese in Crisis* (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 108.

67 Angel Damayanti and Sri Yunanto, 'From Evangelization to Worship Restrictions: The Changing Characteristics of Threat Perception between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 33:4 (2022), 339-40.

Abdul Hamid, et al, even noted that the views of some Muslims who were resistant to Christianity had begun since the colonial era.<sup>68</sup> History records that Christianity arrived in the archipelago at the same time as Western colonization. In addition, the data also shows that quite a lot of Indigenous people at that time were attracted to Christianity, not only through the preaching of the Gospel, but also through their role in overcoming various kinds of social problems, such as poverty, disease, education, and others. Thus, there was an experience where Christian social action, although not intended to convert people to Christianity, attracted many individuals and ultimately led them to convert to Christianity. Based on this historical experience, it is understandable that some Muslims view the presence of Christians as a threat and that any activities they undertake are regarded as Christianizing.

Thirdly, the concrete experiences of KARINAKAS and YEU demonstrate that they have to address the issue of Christianization in their social work. In interviews with YEU officials, they stated that the issue of Christianization in their services is a common occurrence; even when their services run smoothly and are free from the issue of Christianization, it still is lingering.<sup>69</sup> The issue of Christianization is related to the Christian symbols that they intentionally or unintentionally carry. KARINAKAS experienced rejection in three hamlets in Karangasem Village, Gunung Kidul, namely Lemahbang, Karangasem B, and Mengger, because at the time of the initial socialization, there was a nun who came wearing her conventional religious dress. The symbolism of this dress made it clear that KARINAKAS brought aid and projects from the Church.<sup>70</sup> YEU management also revealed that in several places, such as Lombok and Lhokseumawe, they experienced rejection due to the issue of Christianization, specifically because of the cross symbol they carried. In Lombok, the issue of Christianization was raised because the letter 't' in the word 'ActAliance,' which resembles a cross, was considered to damage Islamic faith.<sup>71</sup> The YEU officials also revealed that in Lhokseumawe, the issue of Christianization was raised from the plastic medicine bag of Bethesda Hospital which has a cross symbol, which for the Muslims is also a denial of

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68 Abdul Hamid, Muhammad Utsman Shalih, and Badrah Uyuni, 'Christianization as a Challenge for Islamic Da'wah in Indonesia', 19–60.

69 Staff 1 of YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), 'Interview on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 14 May 2024.

70 Staff 1 of KARINAKAS, 'Interview on Christianization Issue in KARINAKAS Social Project', 14 May 2024, 1.

71 Staff 1 of YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), 'Interview on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 14 May 2024, 1.

faith.<sup>72</sup> Based on some of this data, it can be concluded that for many Muslims, the presence of Christians, especially if they carry symbols of Christianity, is a threat to their faith.

### 3.4 *Questioning the Generalization of Christianization*

As expressed in Falzon's thought, it is possible for humans to move beyond a single perception that seems to describe society as a whole. In the context of faith-based social work in Indonesia, the issue of Christianization cannot be accepted as a single truth. In fact, in practice, both YEU and KARINAKAS limit excessive publicity of their faith so that the theme of humanity becomes the basis of their social work. Based on the research results, there are at least two possible approaches taken by both KARINAKAS and YEU toward the issue of Christianization and its rejection. First, they try to collaborate with the local government and stakeholders to explain that the assistance and projects they bring are purely social and humanitarian, with absolutely no intention of Christianization. So, both KARINAKAS and YEU definitely reject the alleged Christianization. Secondly, the results of this collaboration determine the next steps and future approaches, namely continuing to aid and run the project or withdrawing and moving to another place. If the results of the collaboration make the community receive the aid and the project open and accepting, then they will continue the aid and run the projects. If, after coordination, the community still refuses, even if only partially, they choose to withdraw and move aside. Once there is an agreement, whether they are accepted or rejected, both parties make a 'Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)'. KARINAKAS and YEU chose to take both stances because they were based on the principle that aid and projects should not be forced. Thus, both the giver and the recipient are free and voluntary; there is no element of coercion. In addition, they believe that if rejected in one place, there are likely to be people in other places who need help and still do.

YEU conducts and implements various anticipatory strategies to minimize the issue of Christianization. Some of the strategies made by YEU include: 1) recruiting both Christian and Muslim staff from the beginning; 2) sending such staff by considering the situation of the region and staff capacity; 3) involving local people to become volunteers; 4) approaching and cooperating with moderate Islamic groups, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah; 5) disclosing Christian identity from the beginning based on the principles in the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP) which is now better

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<sup>72</sup> Staff 2 of YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), 'Interview on Christianization Issue in YEU Social Project', 14 May 2024, 2.

known as the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), of which YEU is a member; 6) maintain the principle of openness by creating a means of communication, e.g. through a hotline service; 7) request a statement from the local government that they are welcome; 8) avoid as much as possible the use of facilities that reveal Christian religious identity, e.g. Sunday School chants and the cross logo (the cross is enough in the heart); as far as possible, respect the local context, e.g. using sarongs and giving greetings as they usually use.

This research found that the Christianization process is not the primary issue in the activities of KARINAKAS and YEU. The fact that these two organizations continue to do social work is a courageous act and an opportunity for interfaith encounters in Indonesia. Their presence in the midst of disasters and emergencies dismantles the stigma that every interfaith encounter is about Christianization. Forms of co-operation to help those suffering from deprivation illustrate that religions can join hands to bring about wellbeing to communities irrespective of their religious identity. Such interfaith cooperation makes people realize that religious issues do not always have to be the main issue, or the core of each religion lies in bringing humanity together. Through the togetherness of people from various religions, the poor and suffering are helped and strengthened; the works of KARINAKAS and YEU volunteers open the doors of dialogue. This shows that dialogue in the form of social-humanitarian work, when people from different religious backgrounds carry out work for a particular community, is still very much needed. From what they do, to borrow Falzon's term, people can see from a new perspective. The issue of Christianization is no longer seen as a barrier to dialogue, but rather as a challenge to be addressed so that dialogue and social fraternity can be pursued. The fear of exposing such stigmas will only give birth to a compartmentalized society. The officials and volunteers of KARINAKAS and YEU have played their role as agents of fraternity. They strive to continue doing social work to open doors to encounter and dialogue.

#### 4 Concluding Remarks

In this research, two realities emerged: an acknowledgement of the issue of Christianization and a challenge to its generalization. This generalization has become a scourge in interfaith relations, as if there cannot be interfaith relations in the context of disaster. Learning from Falzon's thinking, this research shows that Indonesian society does not exist in a binary opposition. There is a tension in the Indonesian society between those who rigidly identify with their respective religions – distancing themselves from

interreligious cooperation without seeking human fraternity – and parties that try to bridge that distance. This is different from what happens in the Rakhine state in Myanmar and in other places where the experience of discrimination based on the religious and ethnic identity become a national issue.<sup>73</sup> In Indonesia, the issue of Christianization is more about citizenship and a local issue. As a consequence, Indonesia has always had certain figures and institutions that could bridge many interreligious tensions. In his article on the hybridity of Christians in Indonesia, Albertus Bagus Laksana concludes that many Catholic writers and intellectuals overcame binary oppositions that divide between the local and the universal, the colonized and the colonial power, and the east and the colonial power.<sup>74</sup> This nuance is also shown in this research in which the ability of YEU and KARINAKAS to maintain the social role of the Christians in a pluralist society enriches fraternity and social cohesion among people from different religious affiliations.

Both YEU and KARINAKAS as social institutions utilize this opportunity of fraternity in their social work while still encouraging social work among people of other religions. It needs to be recognized that there are problems in social relations in Indonesia, so it is impossible to expect a smooth process. However, allowing these relations to continue within the boundaries (distance) will eliminate the opportunity for fraternity and further reduce the possibility of encounters across religious boundaries. Through the continuous work that is maintained in the midst of the challenges posed by the issue of Christianization YEU and KARINAKAS create a new space for encounter. The presence of individuals who think critically and do not necessarily believe in the issue of Christianization becomes an opportunity for fraternity. In addition, humanitarian issues that mobilize people from various religions form a common ground that is very likely to bring fraternity among people from different religions. YEU and KARINAKAS interfaith cooperation allows the integration process with the local community to run more easily.

The findings of this research indicate that opportunities for interfaith encounters in the community are possible as all community members do not universally accept the issue of Christianization. The persistence of interfaith encounters in various forms, despite the imaginary boundaries of Christianization, shows that Indonesia still has the opportunity to build a society that respects differences and fosters social cooperation across religious boundaries.

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73 Chandra Mallampalli, 'Minority Vulnerability in South Asia and China: Towards a Post-Nationalist Imagination', *International Journal of Asian Christianity*, 6:1 (2023), 30.

74 Albertus Bagus Laksana, 'The Pain of Being Hybrid: Catholic Writers and Political Islam in Postcolonial Indonesia', *International Journal of Asian Christianity*, 1:2 (2018), 247.

The imaginary boundaries created by the media and spread by some parties are not shared by all communities. YEU and KARINAKAS did not completely fail to do social work. On many occasions, their initiatives were accepted. These findings suggest that meaningful social initiatives are still possible. It is precisely because imagined divisions persist between Christianity and Islam, humanitarian encounters should be fostered, not shunned.

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